



# COPTIC ORTHODOX CHURCH

[Home](#)[Coptic Church](#) ▾[Holy Synod](#) ▾[Pope Tawadros II](#) ▾[Monasteries & Dioceses](#) ▾[Entities](#) ▾[News](#) ▾[English](#) ▾

## Holy Synod Session, March 2024



### Decrees & Recommendations of the Holy Synod Session, March 2024

On March 7, 2024, at 11 AM, the Holy Synod of the Coptic Orthodox Church, led by H.H. Pope Tawadros II, and with the attendance of 110 of the current 133 members, held the General Meeting at the LOGOS Center of the Papal Residence in St. Bishoy's Monastery – Wadi El-Natrun, Egypt.

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His Holiness the Pope gave an introduction, speaking about the importance of bearing fruits in life and a shepherd's service through the parable of the barren fig tree in Luke 13:6-9.

The main committees of the Holy Synod held their annual meetings over the previous three days starting Monday at the Papal Residence in St. Mark's Cathedral in Abbasiyya – Cairo, to discuss the reports submitted to them by their subcommittees. They issued recommendations that were presented to the members of the synod in the March 7th general session for approval.

The Church declared its belief on the issue of homosexuality through a statement issued by the Holy Synod (mentioned below). In the statement, the Church emphasized its rejection of same-sex relations, supporting her belief with many biblical verses that clearly declare the rejection of such relationships that are contrary to the human nature that God has created.

The following are the decrees and recommendations of the Holy Synod for the March 2024 session:

### **First: Decrees:**

- 1- Restoration of the monastic life to the Monastery of St. Theodore (Tadros) of Shotb in Manfalout – Sohag, Egypt.
- 2- Restoration of the monastic life to the Convent of St. Theodore (Tawadros) the Oriental, the Warrior in Luxor, Egypt.
- 3- Recognition of the Monastery of St. Paul the Apostle in California, USA.
- 4- Recognition of the Monastery of St. Theodore & Saint Moses the Black on the Ismailia Road, Egypt.
- 5- Recognition of the Monastery of St. Mary & Archangel Michael in Bahnasa – Minya, Egypt.
- 6- After consulting with the sister churches of the Eastern Orthodox family, it was decided to suspend the theological dialogue with the Catholic Church, reevaluate the results achieved by the dialogue from its beginning twenty years ago, and establish new standards and mechanisms for the dialogue to proceed in the future.
- 7- Establishing the General Technical Office in the Patriarchate, and branches of it in the dioceses to communicate with various government agencies and finalize procedures related to churches.
- 8- Establishing an office bearing the name H.I.G.H., an abbreviation of "Hands in God's Hand" that is intended to connect members of the Coptic Church abroad and areas in need of service inside Egypt
- 9- Establishing the General Secretariat of Coptic Hospitals in Cairo, similar to the General Secretariat of Coptic Hospitals in Alexandria

### **Second: Recommendations**

- 1- Developing topics that encourage the consolidation of the spirit of nationalism and the positive role in society within Church education curricula.
- 2- Each church should have its own page on one of the social media platforms, on which all church activities should be shared, and a special archive of liturgies, sermons, and spiritual revivals.



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- 2- Each church should have its own page on one of the social media platforms, on which all church activities should be shared, and a special archive of liturgies, sermons, and spiritual revivals.
- 3- The Coptic Orthodox Church affirms its firm position of rejecting all forms of homosexual relationships, because they violate the Holy Bible and the law by which God created man as male and female, and the Church considers any blessing of such relations, whatever its type, to be a blessing for sin, and this is unacceptable.
- 4- Raising awareness of the danger of blood-related marriage and the resulting disorders and disabilities in subsequent generations.
- 5- Integrating the tasks of the development and social care offices in the dioceses and coordinating among them and the Development Partners Committee of the Coptic Orthodox Church through the Bishopric of Public & Social Services.
- 6- Focusing on transforming families dependent on charity into productive and income-earning families, to ensure the education of their children, to benefit from the "Daughter of the King" project, and to provide them with a blessing bag that considers proper nutrition.
- 7- The necessity to add mental health topics in pre-marital classes, as well as in servant's preparation classes and youth meetings.
- 8- Establishing family reconciliation committees before resorting to the Clerical Council for Family Affairs, consisting of a priest, a legal advisor, a psychiatrist, and a female representative.
- 9- Adding a drug test to the tests required before engagement.
- 10- The importance of documenting marriage contracts with the ritual prayers of the Crowning in the Church.
- 11- Caring for teachers of Christian religious education in schools, conducting training courses for them, following-up with them spiritually, and arranging periodic meetings for them through a dedicated priest in every diocese.
- 12- Collecting all books that have been translated from the Coptic heritage into other languages and new book releases for each diocese abroad in one site in order to share the benefit, and avoid duplication of translation.
- 13- The Coptic Orthodox Church prays for the unity of the sister Orthodox Church in Ethiopia, and for peace and love to prevail among all.

## **The Belief of the Coptic Orthodox Church on the Issue of Homosexuality:**

God created man distinct and unique, as the Holy Bible says of the creation of man, "Then God said, 'Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness'" (Genesis 1:26), meaning that God desired man from the beginning to be in His image of holiness, righteousness, and freedom, "So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. Then God blessed them, and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth'" (Genesis 1:27, 28).

This is the Church's belief, that God created man in holiness, male and female, and joined them in the bond of holy matrimony because He is a holy God; "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh" (Genesis 2:24).

God's call to man to live in holiness continued [as witnessed through the Holy Scriptures:] 1 Thessalonians 4:3-5, Hebrews 12:14, and 1 Thessalonians 4:7.

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God's call to man to live in holiness continued [as witnessed through the Holy Scriptures:] 1 Thessalonians 4:3-5, Hebrews 12:14, and 1 Thessalonians 4:7.

God gave man free will for the purpose of living according to His holy will, and to live according to God's divine design for marriage: a male uniting with a female.

Whoever suffers from homosexual tendencies and controls themselves from sexual behaviors, the control is credited to them as a struggle. These who are struggling are left with the warfares of thought, sight, and attractions, just like heterosexuals. As for someone who falls into homosexual behaviors, they are like the heterosexuals who fall into the sin of adultery/fornication, needing true repentance. Both need continuous spiritual and psychological follow-up. These follow-ups have proven effective with unwanted homosexual tendencies. As for those who choose to reconcile with their homosexual tendencies, letting go of themselves to homosexual acts, rejecting spiritual and psychological treatment, and choosing of their own free will to break God's commandment, their condition becomes worse than the one who lives in [struggle against] adultery/fornication. Therefore, they must be warned and cut off from communion until they repent.

The Church believes that the Holy Bible, is the good word of truth for all ages, and the Bible in both Testaments condemns, warns, and forbids sexual practices between two people of the same sex. For example, Saint Paul says: "For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. Likewise, also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due. And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting" (Romans 1:26-28). For additional references, see: 1 Corinthians 6:9-10, Leviticus 18:22, and Leviticus 20:13.

Accordingly, the Coptic Orthodox Church rejects what is called sexual perversion in its general and comprehensive understanding, and all types of sexual practices outside the sacred framework of marriage. It categorically rejects invoking the idea of different cultures to justify same-sex relations within what is called "absolute human freedom," which causes the destruction of humanity. The Church, while affirming its complete belief in [personal] human rights and freedom, also affirms that the freedom of the created is not absolute to the point of transgressing and breaking the laws of the Creator.

The Church also affirms its adherence to its pastoral role in helping its children who suffer from homosexual tendencies, as well as not rejecting them, but to provide support and assistance to them in order to reach psychological and spiritual healing, placing its trust in its Christ, the Holy One, who is able to heal, change, and develop in ways more than what we ask or envision.

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Thursday 7th March 2024 AD, 28th Meshir 1740 AM

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